

Archetypal myth: goddess Durga and the resilient matriarch in Rani Manicka's *The Rice Mother*

ABSTRACT

Ruthless victimization of women is often depicted in Malaysian fiction. Characterized by biasness and brutalities of a predominantly male-centred culture, this theme has been a central theme by writers coming from varied cultural and ethnic backgrounds that makeup Malaysia. Rani Manicka also incorporates such theme in her debut novel, *The Rice Mother* (2003). However, another theme that becomes prominent in this novel is the theme of resiliency ó portrayed mainly through the matriarch figure, Lakshmi. Indeed, Lakshmi's resilience has interesting affinity with Durga, a principal form of the Hindu goddess, and it is against this mythological archetype that we frame the reading of the novel. Ultimately, an understanding of this mythological archetype will provide a clearer lens with which to look at Manicka's story, and thus, the reader will be able to see how she presents the greater purpose of this archetype: to promote the resiliency of the human spirit.

Keyword: Archetype; *The Rice Mother*; Rani Manicka; Durga; Hindu mythology